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ABSTRACT

Following a discussion of the characteristics of an ideal reading program, this paper presents a comparative analysis of two reading programs--one a teacher-created tradebook program and one a commercially prepared basal reader program--and measures them against the ideal. The paper analyzes the programs in terms of the following characteristics: (1) the availability of materials of sufficient variety, style, difficulty, and quality; (2) purpose; (3) continuity; (4) instruction; (5) student practice in reading; (6) evaluation procedures; (7) remediation techniques and materials; and (8) motivation techniques. The paper concludes that both programs were complete and responsible, and that the commercial program, while being strong in continuity and evaluation, was weak in purpose, instruction, and the depth and quality of materials, reading practice, remediation, and motivation. The teacher-created program is revealed in the paper to be strong in the areas of purpose, instruction, practice, remediation, and motivation, but weak in continuity and evaluation. (FL)

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TRADEBOOKS OR BASALS?

Two Programs Measured Against The Standard Of What A Reading Program Should Be

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Description of the
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Arlys Stamm

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Acknowledgement

Without the work of three talented people there would have been nothing to write: Marlys Sloup and Arlys Stamm, the teachers who created and taught the Tradebook Reading Program; the basal teacher, who opened her classroom and her teaching to me knowing full well I was "the enemy."

I. Background of the Study

On any day in thousands of classrooms scattered across the nation one can see lively, imaginative reading programs being taught successfully by the teachers who created them. Yet despite success and admiration such programs are not seriously considered when the time comes to make an official adoption. Then it is only the commercial program that gets looked at and chosen. Not because the people empowered to make curricular decisions don't know excellence when they see it, but because as protectors of institutional order they shy away from eccentricity. At one level, they fear that sanctioning the use of one teacher-created program will open the door to all sorts of dubious practices by other teachers; at another, they doubt that any home grown product is solid enough to provide the thoroughgoing instruction most children need. It seems much safer to bet on an established basal, especially one that is large and complex. With "Myriad Skills Multi-System" in charge, weak teachers will be supported, difficult ones kept in line, parents reassured, and children soundly taught.

As a school with a teacher-created tradebook program going full swing in all our fourth and fifth grade classrooms, filtering down to our third, second and even first grades, and spreading to other schools, we have enjoyed success and admiration and also felt the effects of doubt and fear. Although we don't need a district-wide imprimatur to know we have something good, we do need, in this time of shrinking school budgets and public pressure for conformity, an official acknowledgment that our program is complete, responsible, and pedagogically sound as reassurance that it will not be swept away in the deluge of traditionalist reform.

To establish our credentials - and by extension to suggest that other teacher-created programs may be just as substantial - a descriptive,

analytical study was undertaken. In it we planned to lay out the Crestwood Grade 4/5 Tradebook Reading Program in detail and to measure it against the standard of what a reading program should be. Early in the planning stages, however, it became apparent that such a measurement would not be enough for two reasons: 1) explicit, detailed statements of what a reading program should be are hard to find; either the experts don't know or they'd rather not say 2) the comparison of program to ideal would give the incorrect impression that only this program has flaws. Therefore, we decided to enlarge the scope of our study, including in it a description, analysis and measurement of a widely used and respected commercial basal program, both as a detailed secondary standard and as an example of how any reading program falls short of the ideal.

Beyond the written form or any curriculum is the way it functions in the classroom. Not only are there differences between conception and execution of lessons, but also the added dimensions of students interacting with materials and methods. Thus, in order to see both programs in their fullness and reality it was decided to look at them both on paper and in the classroom.

In addition to our original intentions, then, the following report provides a comparison between a teacher-created program and a commercial program. Their points of likeness and difference yield insights to what a reading program really is and how philosophy and structure influence teacher and student activity. This type of information, being both scarce and useful, should be of interest to all teachers of reading.

II. Philosophical Base: What is a Reading Program?

It was rather surprising to discover that few of the current reading authorities define an ideal reading program and that only one describes

its characteristics. Below is the total collection of explicit statements found in the perusal of some forty methods textbooks:

"A viable reading program is one that develops the basic skills children need in order to read, that teaches children how they can use reading as a tool for learning, that fosters an appreciation of and a taste in literature, and that develops permanent interests in reading for enjoyment."

Robert Karlin[1]

"A balanced program includes instruction in the basal, curricular and recreational reading areas."

Gilbert Schiffman[2]

"The reading program has three phases: 1. developmental reading, 2. functional reading and 3. recreational reading. In a good reading program the phases are interdependent and mutually reinforcing..."

Wayne Otto and Richard J. Smith[3]

"A well-rounded reading program in the middle grades..provides opportunities for as much instruction as each student needs with developmental materials and ample opportunities for applying his or her skills with functional and recreational materials."

Richard J. Smith and Thomas C. Barrett[4]

The single description found of what a good reading program should be is too long to quote here. Essentially, the author specifies the following characteristics:

A good reading program

1. is guided toward specified and agreed upon ends.
2. coordinates related skills and activities (e.g., vocabulary development and writing) with reading.
3. is adapted to individual needs.
4. provides instruction.

5. allows for both guided and independent reading.
6. has a means for diagnosis and remediation of problems.
7. has a means for evaluation.

Gertrude Whipple[5]

For the most part, the methods texts omit theoretical considerations altogether, apparently on the assumption that teachers don't need to design new programs or evaluate exirting ones, dealing instead with literal descriptions of standard types of programs and how to teach them. Some - but by no means all - of the authors do state preferences for a particular type of program, but the reasons they give are concerned with organizational and instructional ease not student motivation or learning. Nevertheless, from careful study of these textbooks one can glean some notions of what their authors conceive a good reading program to be. Taken together with what we have learned from many years of teaching, from using commercial Teacher Guides, and from working on curriculum development committees, they yield a concept that can be expressed as a definition and a list of characteristics. We have tried to make these statements broad and objective, so that they reflect consensus among reading educators, rather than our own biases.

Definition of a Reading Program

The goal of a good school reading program is

to improve students' reading proficiency, refine their tastes and enhance their desire to read.

In order to achieve these goals a reading program should have the following characteristics:

1. fullness--a plentiful array of materials, varied in type, style, difficulty and quality

2. purpose--reasons for reading, materials that satisfy those reasons and varied approaches to different materials
3. continuity--steady and related forward movement in materials, teaching, and student activities
4. instruction--regular teacher activity aimed at improving students' reading proficiency
5. practice--regular and plentiful student reading
6. evaluation--processes for assessing rate and extent of student progress and identifying areas of weakness
7. remediation--techniques and materials for helping students to strengthen weaknesses
8. motivation--emphasis on the usefulness and pleasure to be found in reading and encouragement to read more and more widely and deeply

III. Program Descriptions and Analyses

A Basal Reading Program

Under examination is the fifth grade level of Series r: The New Macmillan Reading Program, a standard basal program used widely throughout the United States. Although the program is analyzed here as a tool for teaching reading, specific content or lessons are not described since the materials themselves are familiar to many teachers and readily accessible to those who wish to study them.

The stated goal of "Macmillan r" is "to develop readers who will use reading in a lifetime pursuit of learning and enjoyment."[6] The program endeavors to reach this goal through a highly structured four part instructional plan and leveled sets of reading, practice and testing materials.

The materials for Macmillan r are a reading textbook, a workbook, a set of work sheets (called "Skills Practice"), placement and assessment tests, a teachers' guide and an optional set of supplementary readings. The student books are either a hard cover edition, containing three sections or "levels" intended for one semester, or soft cover editions each containing a single "level." Reading selections vary from 2 to 15 pages, including liberal illustrations. According to the authors the textbook contains "the best in children's literature" embodied in a "variety of fiction and non-fiction, biography, essays, letters, short stories, poetry and plays" and "classics-modern and traditional."[7] But in fact, of the 70 readings in the fifth grade, 1st semester book, only a fraction are fiction: 11 stories, 4 folk tales or myths, and 1 play. None are "classics"* and, in my opinion, only a handful qualify as literature. As is the custom with textbooks nowdays, Macmillan R offers a bland mix of cute ethnic backgrounds, thin

*The radio play "King Midas and the Golden Touch" is based on a classic fairy tale, but is not of itself a classic rendition and it, too, has been "adapted."

plots and vapid characters, certain not to offend the adults who order books - or to capture the interest of children. Although some of the stories may have been literature in their original form, apparently the adaptation process has robbed them of whatever literary qualitites they once had.

Of the other readings, eight are poems, one an excerpt from a biography, and one a letter. Then there are 16 skills lessons, 6 section (level) introductions and conclusions, and two charts. The rest (20 readings) are factual "articles," "essays," and sketches that should more properly be called summaries because of shallow content and condensed form. It is interesting to speculate about why there is so much non-fiction and so little fiction when traditionally the opposite pattern has held in reading textbooks. Can it be that the changed emphasis is a response to a current public attitude that prizes the "basics" (information, in this case) and disdains "frills" (stories)?

It should be stressed that almost all the copyrighted stories and articles have been abridged or modified. A widely held assumption of basals seems to be that children cannot handle either long works or the original style of recognized authors. Although the intention to protect immature readers from undue difficulty is a worthy one, the results are detrimental: children miss out on both realistic reading and literary quality. As presented in the textbook the selections cannot be anyone's idea of the best in children's literature.

The practices of excerpting and modifying stories and using summary-type articles also have their effect on variety. Despite the apparent range of writing types and topics, selection and adaptation have worked to make them quite homogeneous in structure and style. Since in addition

there is no complexity of information in the articles, no depth of theme or characterization in the fiction, and no richness of language in either, the authors' claim to variety - in the real sense of the word - is spurious. Readers - even young ones - are left with the impression of having skimmed a series of book reports fashioned by the same unimpassioned hand.

The skill areas covered in Macmillan R are:

1. decoding skills - phonics complemented by structural and contextual analysis
2. language skills - grammar, usage, mechanics, and word structure
3. comprehension/literary skills - analysis of authors' techniques, various levels of literary interpretation, higher order thinking skills, and vocabulary development
4. study skills - the use of classroom and library reference sources to locate, organize and report information

As far as a skill scope and sequence is concerned, Macmillan R does a thorough job. All the skills anyone could think of as appropriate for fifth graders (approximately 75) are listed in their index. Of course, it is one thing to list skills and another to teach them. If we assume that it takes at least three lessons for a skill to be "taught," then approximately 30 of the listed skills bear this distinction, certainly a respectable number. (Two skills--using word roots and identifying story elements--appear in more than 20 lessons.) Most of the skills taught are in the categories of Literary Skills and Study/Research Skills, which seems like a sound emphasis for this grade level. On the whole, the skills component of the program seems well covered.

The procedure for teaching laid out in the teachers' guide follows

a set pattern: "introduce, review, review, test, maintain, retest."[8]

These are worked into a three-step general lesson plan:

Step 1. Introduction of vocabulary and unfamiliar story concepts, followed by oral practice and workbook exercises.

Step 2. Introduction of story background and children's relation to it; setting of a purpose for reading; silent reading of story; oral discussion with various levels of comprehension questions; and oral re-reading.

Step 3. Teaching-instruction in four skill areas outlined above followed by oral and written practice.

Actually a fourth step is offered, too: suggestions for additional reading and activities in optional supplementary materials.

The outlines for specific lessons, each organized around a selection in the reading textbook, cover from 10 to 15 pages in the Teachers' Guide. They include a story summary; lists of "outcomes," "objectives" (broken down into skill areas and labeled either "introduce" or "review") and "resources;" an introduction of vocabulary and concepts; a story introduction and purposes for reading; comprehension questions, discussion topics and directions for oral re-reading; and a full outline for the teaching of designated skills. According to the Guide, an entire lesson should take from 3 to 5 days, but this seems to be a low estimate, especially if selections are re-read aloud as the Guide recommends.

It appears that these lesson plans contain everything promised and more, but such abundance presents some difficulties worth noting. The main problem for the teacher is that there is too much to teach - especially when weighed against the brevity of reading selections - and no indication of priorities. A reading program should put reading first and, whatever

its philosophy, set a clear path to reading competence. Macmillan R throws in everything from literary terminology to long vowels to map reading and buries one day's worth of reading under four days of activities.

At the same time there is no flexibility in the abundance. The structure of the program provides only rigid placement and progression for an entire year and the lessons give no guidance to teachers about doing more or less with objectives or omitting some altogether. Again, this seems to be the result of a lack of philosophical clarity about how children learn to read - or worse an attempt to placate every teacher who thinks she knows what children need most.

Workbooks, "Skills Practice" worksheets and tests used in conjunction with Step 3 ("Pacing Skill Development") of the lesson plan make up the main instructional component of the program. Each "Step 3" has 6 to 12 teaching objectives, spanning the four skill areas mentioned earl er, and lists 3 to 7 workbook pages/worksheets to go along with about half of them. The teacher is expected to give explanations and examples, conduct group practice, assign the pages for written practice and to check the completed pages.

Again the difficulty is that there is too much and no focus. Instruction for a single objective - even though most are "review" rather than "introduce" items - must take up at least 10 minutes of group time---and remember that there are 6 to 12 of them. If a teacher tried to reduce that number to a more manageable few, she would probably be influenced by whether or not there are practice pages to go with an objective and decide in favor of those that have pages. As a result instruction would be skewed toward the concrete, discrete, minor skills most easily practiced this way and away from larger, more abstract skills.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that only about half the objectives deal directly with reading. Although two of the program's designated skill areas - "Language Skills" and "Study Skill" are properly included under the major discipline of Language Arts, they are not actually part of the business of learning to read. All language areas are related, of course, but you don't have to know what an adjective is or be able to use an almanac in order to read with ease and comprehension. When we count the workbook/worksheet and test pages devoted to such non-reading areas as spelling, the Dewey Decimal System, or graphs (see chart following*), we begin to realize how much of what purports to be reading instruction and practice in this program is really something else. Not a bad "something else" certainly, but if there is a separate Language Arts program in the classroom, possibly a redundant something else, and from our point of view as analyzers of a reading program, an extraneous something else.

In regard to this data, I must point out that tests and exercises on constructing words with given prefixes and suffixes and matching synonyms and antonyms have not been categorized as "extraneous" even though we personally consider them so. Instead, we accepted the publisher's dubious contention that such work is a part of vocabulary building and the generally held assumption that building vocabulary aids reading. (Our own experience suggest that reading builds vocabulary, not the other way around.)

All remaining workbook/worksheet pages are concerned directly with reading, but before we push them firmly to the plus side for Macmillan R we must recognize that in the workbook there is almost as much testing as instruction, which seems a dysfunctional imbalance. Twenty of the sixty-

*Our accounting would not coincide with the publisher's breakdown of pages since what are labeled as decoding skills, we see as concerned with spelling, syllabication or writing mechanics--writing, not reading skills.

Extraneous Topics Covered by Tests and Practice Sheets

	Workbook	Skills Practice Sheets	Pre-Assessment Tests	Assessment Tests
syllabication	1	2		1
charts/diagrams graphs/maps	7	5	3	1
syllograms		2		1
categorization		4		
reference sources	9	8	2	
grammar	1	1		
language usage	3	5		
linguistics	2			
spelling & writing mechanics	4	4		3
publishing data		1		
composition	4			
terminology	2		1	
Totals	33	32	6	6
No. of pages in material	84	66	12	12

six pages, for example, are explicitly presented as "vocabulary pre-tests" and many others - not labeled tests - actually do no more than check information already presented. Is it unreasonable to expect that a program component designated as "reinforcement" and "independent practice" should provide opportunities to develop and refine skills rather than just test mastery? On the other hand, the "Skills Practice" sheets do a far better job as learning tools, mainly because most pages include an explanation and examples at the top. Students who are unsure of themselves can check their understanding against them and make adjustments that lead to better learning.

Both the pre-assessment and assessment tests are of the criterion-reverenced type, designed to indicate clearly student strengths and weaknesses. Objectives are marked on each test, and these can be matched to "Prescription Tables" in the Teachers' Guide which show teaching pages, practice pages and even extra reinforcement masters available in the Teacher's Edition. It appears that if used properly these tests would be a valuable aid to instruction.

On the whole, Macmillan R disappoints. Its thorough Teachers' Guide and systematic skills sequence cannot compensate for a weak foundation and a lack of focus. On one hand the reading materials are consistently insipid, without power to challenge young minds or capture the imagination. On the other, the instructional abundance turns out to be a quagmire from which a floundering teacher must dig her own way out or sink. Sad to say, this story is an all too typical product of commercial publishers, which despite all the resources of talent, money, time and technology at their command, decide to build their programs not on a philosophy, but on selling points.

A Tradebook Program

In order to describe and analyze the Crestwood Tradebook Reading Program, I have included the entire curricular document written by teachers, Marlys Sloup and Arlys Stamm. Since it has not been published anywhere else, it seemed necessary to reproduce it in its entirety here for readers.

The paramount goal of our tradebook reading program is to develop young readers who read with mature understanding, see reading as a major way to learn the things they want and need to know, and enjoy reading. Basic to achieving this goal is the use of complete works in the classroom. To become truly a reader, one must interact with written material fully and deeply, comprehending, sensing, imagining, predicting, inferring, and feeling all the writer's messages, and then integrating them into a complete pattern of meaning. The collections of literary excerpts and short pieces offered by basal reading textbooks do not offer enough fullness or depth for this kind of process to operate. Complete, high quality tradebooks do, and because they provide experiences that satisfy the intellect and the emotions, they also move students to seek out other books that will do the same.

In selecting the works that will help us accomplish our goal, we look for many different types of books and writing styles; themes and topics that are of general and specific interest to young people and that promise to stimulate thought, discussion and writing; and above all, high quality literature. Even though our students are young and inexperienced, we believe that they need the best available at their level in order to develop fully as readers.

The major emphasis in our teaching is the synthesis of meaning. That is, we continually ask students to bring together their literal comprehension, intuitions, feelings, and aesthetic responses into a holistic understanding of what a writer is trying to say and do with his work. This approach is in sharp contrast to most reading approaches which ask instead that students

break down their reading into a number of compartmentalized skills.

At the same time, skill work does have a place in our program. We believe that in order to study, organize material, or write - in fact, to do all the types of operations considered production - some mastery of technical skills, such as note taking and alphabetizing, is necessary. We emphasize these skills for functional purposes through functional techniques. For example, we help children to see that they need to be able to spell correctly to write for a public audience and that they can control the word spellings they need by making efficiert use of human and print resources and their own knowledge of the way language works. Functional teaching also means that we try to keep skill instruction real and immediate; serving an authentic purpose that children recognize as important - now.

Program Components

Group Trade Book Reading

No prearranged selection of books is made for students at the beginning of the year. The choices evolve as teachers gain knowledge of the students' needs and abilities through evaluating each reading experience and then choose a book that suits that time, skill need and group of students. This flexibility allows us to accommodate different rates of learning as well as be sensitive to the interests of an individual or group.

Our library of reading books is located in a central place available only to the teachers using the program. A check out sheet is posted so teachers know where titles are being used. When it is time to select a new book for a group we generally choose three or four appropriate possibilities in case a particular book is being used by another teacher. Some titles have enough copies for two groups to read.

The child's name is entered inside the back cover of the book and respect and care for the book are emphasized. Fines are assessed for lost books and for more than normal wear. These are seldom needed, however.

A unit of work has been prepared in advance for each book. With each unit special thought is given to which comprehension objectives might be taught through a given book. Some books naturally lend themselves to practicing certain skills or illustrating styles in language. For example:

ordering sequence of events (Alvin's Swap Shop by Clifford Hicks)

cause and effect (Ramona the Pest by Beverly Cleary)

richness of description (Secret of the Andes by Ann Nolan Clark)

figurative language (Genie of Sutton Place by George Seldon)

dialect (The Perilous Road by William O. Steele)

Comprehension emphases also emerge regularly during class from the interaction of certain children with the materials. The units include question sheets which correspond with each week's reading assignment of 20-50 pages. Also included in the units may be pictures, vocabulary work, maps, author write-ups, writing ideas coordinated with the reading and questions for group discussions. The units are constantly being added to as new ideas and materials are found. Question sheets are also revised when improvements are needed or better ideas come along.

Each week students read a specified number of pages in their group trade book. They are given a question sheet covering the assigned pages to be completed by the end of the assignment period. The group meets two to three times a week to discuss the material and work on appropriate skills.

Although worksheets concentrate on comprehension of the reading, they also include opportunities for personal opinion, predicting outcomes, relating literary experiences to one's own and research. The number of worksheets per book depends on the length of the book and/or difficulty. The units last from two to six weeks.

Questions on the worksheets require answers in sentence or paragraph form. There are no "fill in the blanks." We have worked very hard to create questions in varying degrees of difficulty. It is our intent to include questions using a range of thinking skills on each sheet. Books at the lower levels have a greater percentage of questions that call for simple recall and description, ordering of events, predicting outcomes, and limited interpretation and comparison. As books become more difficult and require greater reading competency, questioning concentrates on higher thinking skills such as analyzing author's purpose and style, exploring issues, supporting opinions, and applying concepts to new situations.

The worksheets also reflect different reading objectives for different types of writing. For a mystery more questions would be directed toward plot and how characters and events affect the story. Historical fiction and factual writing would stimulate research. Fiction that raises contemporary issues and problems lends itself to opinion writing and comparing situations in books to students' lives.

Silent Reading

One-half hour a day is devoted to silent reading. This provides ample time for students to complete trade book reading assignments and to pursue reading interests of their own. Teachers provide a model by reading during this period, too.

Reading To The Students

In addition to student's own reading, teachers read each day from a book carefully selected to:

complement another subject area such as American history (e.g., My Brother Sam is Dead by James and Christopher Collier)

show richness of language and vocabulary (e.g., Wind in the Willows by Kenneth Grahame)

introduce an author that students might explore on their own (e.g., Sid Fleishman)

or

explore themes and issues such as environmental protection (e.g., Canyon Winter by Walt Morey)

We believe that students can learn reading skills from listening to books even when they cannot handle the technical demands of reading on their own.

Recreational Reading

Teachers encourage and keep records on recreational reading that students do beyond the required trade books. Individual conferences are arranged so students can share their reading experiences with the teacher on a personal basis. During this time the teachers can assess reading habits and recommend authors and/or specific titles for additional readings that coincide with the student's ability and interests.

The yearly goal is to hold conferences on at least twelve books per student, ranging over several categories of reading. To accomplish this, a teacher needs to meet individually with ten students a week for a period of 10 to 15 minutes each.

Resource Reading

Each week students are required to complete two bulletin board quizzes.

In one quiz newspaper articles and cartoons are posted with questions designed to develop interpretative reading skills. The second quiz has a variety of questions that require students to become users of reference materials in the classroom, the IMC and beyond the school environment.

Skill Areas

The four skill areas emphasized throughout the program are:

1. Comprehension skills--interpreting pictorial materials, understanding figurative language, developing critical reading, recognizing sequence, comparison and cause and effect

2. Study skills--utilizing reference materials in the classroom and beyond, evaluating information, individual responsibility

3. Vocabulary development--context clues, idioms, multiple meanings

4. Literary skills--recognition and appreciation of author's style, tone and mood, appreciation of forms of literature.

Skillwork is accomplished through weekly comprehension question sheets, direct instruction, weekly newspaper and reference quizzes, and small and large group discussions of trade books and books read aloud.

Skill sequence varies from class to class, group to group, and child to child as needs are assessed. Written language skills such as usage, mechanics and word structure are considered part of our writing program but are closely integrated with the reading program on any written work.

Materials

Tradebooks

A tradebook library of 160+ carefully selected titles comprises our core of instructional materials. We have purchased seven to eight copies of each title. In building our library, we have attempted to include a variety of types of writing: poetry, short story, historical fiction, science fiction, biography, mystery, factual pieces and contemporary fiction. Our growing collection of historical fiction is used to extend and supplement our social studies curriculum. (See chart) We are introducing our students to many award winning books and respected contemporary authors. Themes include those of interest to students of this age, such as animals, survival and interpersonal relations. Our trade books have been reviewed specifically for their treatment of racial, social, economic and ethnic groups. Many books have been selected upon the recommendation of our IMC Director and library journals.

Six to eight new titles are added each year, as well as replacement copies. It has been difficult to find suitable trade books in certain areas such as poetry and short story selections. We are also trying to broaden our selections of mystery, biographical and factual readings.

A few titles have been eliminated from our collection because they were unavailable for replacement or were not appealing to students and teachers.

During a year thirty-five to forty-five books are used with a class, depending on the number of functioning groups. Each child will read eight to nine books for instructional reading.

Types of Books

Book Category	Sample Titles
Adventure	My Side of the Mountain by Jean George Runaway Ralph by Beverly Cleary Snow Treasure by Marie McSwigan
Animal - Fact	Champion Dog Prince Tom by Jean Fritz and Tom Clute Follow A Fisher by Laurence Pringle Old Bones by Mildred Masten Pace
Animal - Fiction	Cricket in Times Square by George Selden The Midnight Fox by Betsy Byars Wild Orphan by Robert Froman
Biography	The Endless Steppe by Esther Hautzig Freedom Train by Dorothy Sterling Louis Braille by Margaret Davidson
Contemporary Issues	A Figure of Speech by Norma Fox Mazer The Great Dane Thor by Walter Farley The Meat in the Sandwich by Alice Bach
Historical Fiction	Canalboat to Freedom by Thomas Fall The Perilous Road by William O. Steele Sing Down the Moon by Scott O'Dell
Modern Situational Fiction	Henry Reed's Babysitting Service by Keith Robertson Philip Hall Likes Me, I Reckon Maybe by Betty Greene Ramona The Pest by Beverly Cleary
Mystery	Alvin's Secret Code by Clifford Hicks From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler by E. L. Konigsburg Secret of the Andes by Ann Nolan Clark
Poetry	Arrow Book of Funny Poems by Eleanor Clymer Arrow Book of Poetry by Ann McGovern
Science	Secret Story of Pueblo Bonito by Mary and Folsom Elting The Story of the Ice Age by Rose Wyler and Gerald Ames Volcanoes by Patricia Lauber
Science Fiction/ Fantasy	The Forgotten Door by Alexander Key Genie of Sutton Place by George Selden Tuck Everlasting by Natalie Babbit
Short Stories	Paul Bunyan Swings His Ax by Dell McCormick When Schlemiel Went to Warsaw by Isaac Singer
Social/Ethnic Issues	Plain Girl by Virginia Sorensen Roosevelt Grady by Louisa Shotwell A Year in the Life of Rosie Bernard by Barbara Brennar Summer of the Swans by Betsy Byars

Readability levels in our tradebook library range from grades 2 through 8, with titles clustering in grades 4-6. We consider complexity of plot and subject matter, as well as language patterns and vocabulary when determining a book's level.

Readability Distribution

Readability Level	Number of Titles
Grades 7-8	9
6	26
5	32
4-5	35
4	32
3-4	20
3	12
2	3
Suitable for all	3

Reference Materials

Teacher-constructed news and reference quizzes posted weekly on a classroom bulletin board are a regular part of the instructional reading program. These quizzes enlarge the dimension of factual reading that might otherwise be overshadowed by fiction. Students have four days to answer the eight to twelve questions. To answer questions, they need to use many sources (e.g., a newspaper clipping, cartoon, dictionary, atlas, map, almanac, quotation book, encyclopedia, telephone directory, or library card file). Sources may be available in the classroom, IMC or outside of the school setting.

Read-Aloud-Books

Throughout the year each teacher spends twenty to thirty minutes each day reading to the class from selected books. These books, chosen for literary quality and appeal to children, are intended to extend literary horizons. Read aloud they are within the comprehension

range of fourth and fifth graders, even though some might be technically too difficult for students to read on their own. Eight to ten books are completed each year. Examples of read-aloud-books are:

Burnett, Frances Hodgson. Secret Garden

Ellis, Mel. Ironhead

Dahl, Roald. Danny Champion of the World

Langford, Cameron. Winter of the Fisher

O'Brien, Robert C. Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH

Raskin, Ellen. The Westing Game

Tolkien, J. R.R. The Hobbit

Recreational Reading Materials

Books and magazines from home, the classroom and the IMC are used for recreational reading. Each classroom subscribes to National Geographic World and Ranger Rick, and each classroom has an extensive library of single copy paperback books. Magazines also add to the quantity of factual reading and provide experiences with journalistic style that books do not offer.

Worksheets

Teacher-designed comprehension worksheets have been written to correspond to each week's reading assignment of twenty to fifty pages. Depending upon the length and complexity of each book, there may be two to six worksheets per book. Students complete one worksheet per week.

Sample Lesson Plan

The unit for Boris is set up to take five to six weeks to complete the reading and related skill work. The reading group would meet ten to twelve times during this period. Following are the sample

plans for the first four group meetings, along with vocabulary, questions from comprehension worksheets and related research and writing ideas for the whole book.

BORIS by Jaap ter Haar

The story of a boy, a city, and a war...

Set in Leningrad during the dreadful 500 days in 1942-23 when the city lay under siege by the German army, Boris is the story of a courageous boy who faces the bitter life and death realities of war and human survival, and, with a growing sense of compassion for all mankind, looks hopefully toward the future when all men can lay down their arms and embrace one another as brothers.

--Copied from the cover of the Dell Yearling book, BORIS

Skill emphasis for Boris is in three major areas.

Comprehension: developing critical reading; making judgments, inferences, predictions
distinguishing point of view, fact and opinion
interpreting author's style--use of the diary, dreams, flashbacks, quick shifts in time and place within chapters

Vocabulary: introduction to war terminology and European-English words
using context to interpret conversation in German

Research: reading to find related information
interviewing
note taking

Sample Lesson Plan for Boris by Jaap ter Haar

Meeting 1

Introduce the book

Setting: Leningrad Boris' home
December, 1942

Map work: Locate Leningrad on a globe and a flat map

Compare latitude with that of Wisconsin/United States

Background information: General introduction to WW II

Nations involved

Time in relation to students' own family

Events leading up to the Siege

Characters: Boris, age 12

Boris' mother

Nadia, age 14

Vocabulary: lorries, convoy, windscreen, queues, canteen,

Leningrad, Lake Ladoga

Author's style: Call attention to the use of the recurring dream in Chapter I

Assign pages 9-31 to be read silently

Read to find out (might assign note taking) about

conditions in Leningrad

more about Boris, Mother, Nadia

Meeting 2

Discuss pages 9-31

Share feelings and facts about life in Leningrad

about Boris, Mother, Nadia

Discuss vocabulary in context of the story: words introduced in

Meeting 1 + besieged, evacuate, salvage workers, ration card

Assign question sheet for pages 9-31

Read over questions - establish expectations for answers

Meeting 3

Discuss pages 9-31 Sample questions:

How did Nadia make herself feel better about the food cheating?

The siren! (page 27) How did the people react?

Describe what happened.

Is execution justified for infraction of food rationing rules in time of war?

Introduce pages 32-67

In this assignment, Nadia and Boris are going to do something very dangerous. Why do you think they would attempt another risky venture?

Assign pages 32-67 to be read silently

Alert students to German language on pages 51-59

Assign written comprehension questions for pages 32-67

Meeting 4

Discuss pages 32-67 Sample questions:

How did the author set the mood for the dangerous adventure?

Describe No-Man's-Land. Why was it named that?

How did you feel as Nadia dropped down in the snow?

How did you feel when Boris discovered the boot next to him?

Why is there such a conflict in Boris regarding taking the food and accepting favors from the soldier?

How did Boris' attitude toward the Germans change?

Reread pages 51-59

Using context of the English words, "guess" what the Germans were saying.

**Invite a German speaking person to visit the group to translate the German conversation.

Discuss vocabulary in context of the story: No-Man's-Land, clambered, platoon, cognac, haversack, ominous, ruefully

Introduce pages 68-94

Meet Uncle Vanya - Why was he at Boris' home?

What do you think is going to happen to Boris? to Nadia?

Snow falls on Leningrad. What is the Boris' reaction to this natural happening?

Vocabulary Lists for Boris

Pages 9-31

lorries	queues	Leningrad	besieged
convoy	canteen	Lake Ladoga	evacuate
windscreen	ration card	salvage workers	

Pages 32-67

No-Man's-Land	clambered	cognac	ominous
platoon		haversack	ruefully

Pages 68-94

civilians	disinfectant	significantly	mantle
ikon	rations	idly	

Pages 95-126

civil defence	anguish	forestalled	defy
tsar/tsarina	furtively	partisans	foundling

Pages 127-152

Rasputin	asbestos gloves	reproach	Pushkin
trestle	sombre	partisan	

Sample Questions for Writing and/or Discussion

Is execution justified for infraction of food rationing rules in time of war? (pages 9-31)

"...Even in an inhumane war people can show human feelings." (page 63) In times of war can you consider members of the enemy as "friends"? Relate this to the story. (pages 32-67)

Boris' mother feels he should be evacuated. Boris doesn't want to go. As an "outsider" what is your opinion? (pages 68-94)

Explain: "Only a brave man has the courage to admit he knows fear." (page 99)

What is the importance of the diary to Nadia? to Boris? to the whole story?

Sample Worksheet Questions for Boris by Jaap Ter Haar

Pages 9-31

What brought on the frequent nightmare that Boris had?

Explain the situation Leningrad is in because of the war.

What does it mean to be evacuated?

Why didn't Boris want to leave? (Two reasons, please)

What was the food rationing system?

What had Nadia done to cause Boris to be afraid?

How might losing the soup have seemed like a punishment to them?

Pages 32-67

Why is Boris dismayed when he finds out Nadia's plan?

What do you think brought Boris to attempt such a dangerous mission?

Describe the "No-Man's-Land" that Boris and Nadia crossed.

How do you think Boris felt when Nadia dropped down in the snow?

What did Boris learn about war from his encounter with the German soldiers?

Boris felt that the German soldiers were very brave. Why?

Why do you feel it was so difficult for the Russians to let the Germans go?

Pages 68-94

Why had Boris' mother been so worried while he was gone?

Why did Boris finally agree to go to his Aunt's place?

How has the war affected Nadia's and Boris' thoughts about the future?

What did people talk about while waiting in the soup lines?

Why did Boris especially enjoy the time right after going to bed?

Why did Boris like Nadia so much and feel so close to her?

Pages 95-126

Even though Boris' mother was always in bed, how was she an especially good mother?

Why do you suppose Boris' mother insisted on talking about Nadia and reading her diary?

What did Nadia talk about in her diary?

What did Boris feel would happen at the theater?

Why do you think they gave the children such a fine meal?

Give two reasons why the children did not enjoy the play.

Pages 127-152

Describe the trip home from the theater.

Why was the piece of meat so important to Boris?

How did the soldier help give Boris hope?

Why did Boris feel unhappy about the beaten Germans?

How did Boris show his fellow Russians true "love" of man?

How did Nadia finally appear in a movie?

Related Research

Read about the Siege of Leningrad in an encyclopedia and/or history book.

Read about Life in Leningrad. What are the effects of climate and geography on the way the people live?

What are the symptoms of malnutrition?

Find out about famous Russians mentioned in the story.

Rasputin	Peter the Great
Pushkin	Catharine the Great

Interview family members to find out their involvement in WW II, and how WW II affected life in the United States.

Procedures

At the beginning of the year students' reading skills are evaluated through informal reading inventories. Data from previous teachers are taken into consideration. Also, numerous short writings are assigned to help the teachers know students' interests, fears and attitudes that might affect learning. Thus, skills, interests and personalities are all considered in the formation of groups and choice of books.

With mixed grade classrooms, there are always four or five groups functioning at a time. These groups usually have five or six members, but they may be as small as two people or as large as eight.

Constant assessment is made during the reading of each book so adjustments in grouping may be made when new group books are selected. Students can be placed in a group that better fits their current skill needs and interests. This flexibility in grouping is practiced throughout the year.

Reading groups meet with the teacher two or three times a week for fifteen to forty-five minutes. Each week group members are given a common reading assignment of 20-50 pages which is introduced during one small group meeting. Time is provided to read, and often reread, the assignment during the daily silent reading time. Pecularities of form, vocabulary, characters, and setting as well as some general plot predictions are covered in the introductory pre-reading session. In the follow up group meeting/s the assigned pages are discussed for general comprehension. Words are defined using context clues. Attention may be drawn to the author's use of

descriptive language; the use of similes or metaphors or other figurative language. In some books the author's point of view is discussed in detail or the validity of factual inf mation is questioned as the children become more critical readers. Time is spent explaining, comparing, predicting, proving, confirming or rejecting ideas as students attempt to integrate the new information into their personal experience frames. Students practice skimming to locate specific information. Oral reading, used to prove a point, clarify vocabulary, set a mood or practice reading with expression, is always brief and explicitly connected with its purpose.

Each week students are assigned a comprehension worksheet related to the reading assignment. This is to be completed during their daily work time following silent reading. Worksheets are designed so that complete sentences are expected for the question answers. Corrected grammar, usage and spelling are also expected on the worksheet when it is handed in. These worksheets are introduced in the small reading group. Follow up questions may be handled individually or in the group.

Lessons, large or small group or individual, are taught twice a week on the use of reference materials needed to answer the weekly reference quizzes. Students learn to be users of the telephone directory, dictionary, encyclopedia, almanac, atlas and maps, quotation books and other factual books. Lessons using the thesaurus are incorporated into reading related writing. Clusters of word categorizing lessons are presented six to eight times during the year.

Remedial help is given to individual children during their study times. One-to-one conferences take place daily as needed to help clarify vocabulary, the worksheet questions and other misunderstandings. Mechanical correctness of the worksheets is also monitored individually. Remedial help may also be provided to the whole group when a common need exists.

In both conception and content the Crestwood Tradebook Reading Program is radically different from a basal program. Some of those differences are clearly strengths and some weaknesses; but at the same time, there are others that are not easily classified. Whether or not one approves them depends which side of the philosophical fence he or she is sitting on.

A considerable difference is apparent in materials. In the tradebook program everything used with students is complete, authentic and immediate. Completeness is an important factor for learning to read that commercial programs ignore. Children, no matter how young, need the experience of dealing with length, depth and complexity. They also need the sustained involvement fostered by complete books that introduces them to the power of literature, motivating them to read books on their own. Authenticity, the presentation of works in the writer's own words, challenges children and awakens them to style. Immediacy, which means the use of what is fresh, appealing and important to children at a particular time, convinces them that reading is a good way to learn and enjoy. In effect, through tradebooks children are brought into the real world of reading and expected to cope with its variety and difficulties. No basal that pre-selects, cuts and re-writes material for the "average" child (and for the biases and special interests of the adults who order the basals) can offer that kind of real experience.

In general the tradebooks used are high quality literature. Although not all are classics, many are, and all have received some critical approval. In contrast, most basal selections have been written or modified by staff writers. While there is no intention to diminish quality in basals, limited funds (to pay established writers), and the perceived need to simplify for immature readers inevitably produce such a side effect.

The tradebook library also provides a more flexible corpus of materials than a basal program. Teachers can respond to children's needs and tastes without great difficulty or expense by adding or deleting titles. They can move also far above and below the nominal grade level of their classrooms without infringing on the materials of any other teacher. Because there is no rigid sequence in materials or the lessons that go with them, children can be moved from one group to another as their interests or abilities change. For the children there is the added advantage of not being labeled by the grade stamped on the spine of a reading book.

If there is a weakness in the tradebook library, it is an imbalance of types in the materials available. Most of the books are novels; there are only two short story collections and no plays. In non-fiction areas there is at present a sufficient number of titles to provide variety for a class, but it continues to be difficult to find new titles to add. Although newspapers and magazines enlarge the non-fiction areas, these components are hard to stabilize: newspaper articles can't be used from year to year, and there is no way to assure that a balance of topics and writing styles will be coming along regularly through these media. There is no question that a basal program provides greater variety in types of reading; although, as pointed out earlier, that variety is often a superficial one of topic rather than structure, ideas, or style.

The instructional part of the tradebook program differs from a basal program in its concentration on comprehension. Not only are there fewer skills identified for teaching, but those skills are mostly comprehension-related and integrated into a general search for meaning. The only other group of skills included in the reading program - and the only ones taught discretely - are research skills. As a result of paring down the number

of things that must be given attention and an integrated approach, management of the program becomes easier for the teacher and the chance of achieving greater depth of understanding is increased. Nevertheless, the switch in emphasis which goes so far as to delete some traditional skills in word analysis, spelling* and usage*, and a renunciation of traditional techniques is a controversial matter. Many teachers could not and would not teach a program that excludes what they believe is essential for children's reading development. On the other side, it must be understood that the omissions are not the result of laziness or carelessness. The creators of the program are convinced - by evidence of experience and research - that such skills are irrelevant to learning to read and that discrete teaching and formal drills are counter-productive.

In considering the written curriculum as a whole, one realizes that there are several other things ordinarily expected that are not included: skill lesson plans (in research), evaluation tools, remedial lesson plans, a scope and sequence of materials and skills, and a system for keeping track of student progress. But except for the research lessons - which clearly should be included because they are a separate strand from tradebooks - these absences are not necessarily weaknesses. At a philosophical level, the creators are arguing that these things cannot be created apart from children or in advance of need; teachers must make their own decisions and devise their own techniques. Without disagreeing, I would have to add that many teachers are not able to do so and need a more defined structure. I believe it would be possible to provide some of that structure - but not all - within the philosophy of the program. A scope and sequence for

*These are included instead in the writing program where they seem more appropriately placed.

research skills lessons could be added; also a system for classifying books more precisely. The creators could write a guide to techniques for skill-teaching, evaluation and remediation. A simple student achievement chart based on comprehension might also be possible. But to go further would destroy the flexibility and responsiveness of the program making it just another conventional program with unconventional materials.

Also, in looking at the curriculum as a whole we see its greatest strength: internal consistency. Unlike most basal programs, it has a complete and coherent philosophical foundation, unmarred by concessions to popular fads. What is more, its materials, methods and lessons carry through that philosophy boldly and straightforwardly, never demeaning themselves by trying to be all things to all people.

IV. Classroom Observation of Programs

The basal program examined in this study is Series R: The New Macmillan Reading Program, Macmillan Publishing Company, 1975. The teacher observed using it was recommended by a district curriculum coordinator as a fine teacher who did an excellent job of teaching a basal program. Her principal, when contacted, seconded this recommendation. The tradebook program examined was the one described earlier, and the teacher was one of its creators. As her principal, I consider her an excellent teacher and a skilled practitioner of this approach to reading instruction.

Before beginning the study I met with both teachers to explain my purposes and to show them the forms I would use. I obtained their consent to have their classes observed and reported on. We scheduled observations and conferences for discussion of observations at their convenience. They selected the children I would follow for tabulation of student time distribution. Both read this manuscript in its rough form, critiquing my observations and conclusions, and consented to its public distribution.

There were 28 fifth grade pupils in the basal classroom (hereafter referred to as BC) and 26 fourth and fifth graders in the tradebook classroom (TC hereafter). General socio-economic background in both schools is upper middle class. The BC brought together children from three different homerooms into three fairly homogeneous reading groups, working in fourth, fifth, and sixth grade level materials. The TC was a self-contained heterogeneous classroom in which children were placed into 5 ability groups, working in materials that ranged from third grade to sixth grade level in readability.

In order to study the two reading programs in operation I spent seven daily sessions in each classroom: 5 consecutive sessions to see

the direction and extent of various reading activities, 1 to note how selected students apportioned their time and 1 to note how the teacher apportioned her time. The actual minutes of each classroom session varied according to that day's schedule and unplanned-for interruptions, but on the average a session lasted 90 minutes in the BC and 75 minutes in the TC. There was an important scheduling difference between the two classrooms: the basal teacher (BT) was confined to a block of time between 9:35 and 11:30 every day (interrupted at 10:30 for recess) in which she had to teach Language Arts and reading, while the tradebook teacher (TT) was free to make her own schedule, and extend it as she deemed necessary. The latter attempted to have reading (separate from the writing and oral parts of Language Arts) for the first part of every morning, but often had to break lessons for classes in art, gym, etc. When that happened, she held reading class again for 30 to 45 minutes in the early afternoon in order to get in all the work she felt needed to be done.

In the BC a typical reading/language arts session was divided this way:

spelling lesson--10 minutes

directions for daily assignments--5 minutes

reading groups (3 out of 3)-- 25 minutes each

In the TC a typical session was divided as follows:

general activity time- 15 minutes

silent reading--20 minutes

reading groups (2 or 3 out of 5)--15-20 minutes each

individual book conferences--10 minutes

general instruction --10 minutes

Types of Classroom Activities

Although spelling lessons and written spelling exercises took up a regular part of the language arts time daily in the BC, I will not

report on their content since they were not really related to the reading program, just occurring during the same block of time. Those composition assignments given in the BC that were linked to reading will be included in this report of activities.

One week of reading sessions in the BC included the following types of activities:

- silent reading
- oral reading
- written paragraphs
- correction of exercises
- library research
- use of glossary and dictionary
- reviewing skills
- giving oral reports based on research
- skimming to find information
- group discussion of
  - plot
  - character
  - vocabulary
  - story background
- workbook/worksheet exercises on
  - comprehension
  - outlining
  - possessives
  - literary terminology
  - literary structure
- instruction on workbook/worksheet pages
- taking pre-tests and post tests from workbooks
- reading test scores

Although all of the above activities were covered in one week's class time, some were one time or lightly touched events, while others received strong and repeated attention. In the reading groups emphasis was divided among discussion of plot and character, checking of written exercises along with instruction for new exercises, and oral reading. Discussion questions were directed at comprehension of events and behavior of characters. Considerable time was also spent in establishing background, making sure that students had sufficient knowledge of times, settings, and customs to understand stories. Since all students were working on several daily written assignments at once and most of them also had an additional 3-4 day research assignment, a great deal of attention was given to checking progress and giving instructions for new assignments. Along with this process, the BT did most of her instruction: reviewing terms and procedures, explaining expectations, and giving directions. Since the textbook lessons for that week introduced no new concepts or processes, all instruction observed was of the review type. In the oral reading part of the reading group session, which took place most of the days observed, each student read aloud for 2-3 minutes from continuous passages in the textbook or workbook.

Most of student seat time was spent on reading/writing exercises, which included completing workbook and worksheet pages in both reading and spelling, writing definitions of vocabulary words, and - for one group - outlining a story from the reading text. Students also did short (from a paragraph to a page) writings, directly or indirectly related to their reading. Such writings were assigned to reading groups two or three times

during the observation week. All written work was handed in for teacher correction. I saw only 4 or 5 students go out to the library to do research; others went during periods when I was not present. When asked about the amount of textbook reading required for that week, the BT informed me that her low group had 12 pages; the middle group, 19; and the high group, 29. The majority of children completed these assignments in one day so that most of the silent reading done over 5 days was in workbooks, consisting of instructions, sentences, paragraphs. Each day 3-5 children finished their assigned work and went on to read classroom books of their own choosing.

Twice the reading/language arts period included a fifteen minute oral portion during which 3-5 students from the top and middle groups reported on their research. Reports were complete, accurate and well-rehearsed, indicating that students understood their assignments and had the skills to fulfill them, suggesting that thorough instruction had been given previously.

In the TC activities for the week included:

silent reading

library research

writing answers to comprehension questions

skimming to find information

oral reading

individual book conferences with teacher

using classroom reference materials

skill instruction

preparation for reading

remediation of individual problems

group discussion of

- plot
- character
- significance of events
- story meaning
- prediction
- vocabulary
- students' experiences, feelings and interests as related to stories
- literary techniques
- philosophical issues

working on classroom quizzes and contests

taking notes on reading

written skill exercises

In the TC, reading groups were used for discussion and instruction with only minor attention given to silent and oral reading and none to correction of work. Discussion which took up one-half to two-thirds of each group session was divided among three foci: understanding of what had been read, preparation for new reading, and finding a personal relationship to literature. Many questions were concerned with significance, meaning, author's techniques and purposes. The TT spent considerable time preparing students to read. She asked them to predict future events and behavior from what they already knew and directed them to read to find out specific things and to be on the lookout for certain "clues." She

also talked with students about the humor, suspense, atmosphere, etc. they had found and would continue to find in stories. Vocabulary work was integrated into questions and discussion as word meanings were explore in context; there were no written exercises on vocabulary.

Instruction was directed at understanding plot movement, story meanings, figurative language and literary devices. Although no formal terminology was used and no written exercises were assigned, students were expected to take notes on specified points; for example, the qualities demonstrated by a character assigned to each student. Instruction also included explaining the expectations for answering questions on activity sheets that students were working on. Each sheet contained five to seven comprehension (including comprehension of vocabulary) questions on that portion (1/4 to 1/3) of a tradebook being read to be completed in one week's time. Some group time was also spent on going over words, sentences, ideas, etc. that students had had trouble with on previous work, but no actual correction of written work was done in the group while I was there.

Brief exercises on skimming, silent reading, and oral reading were also included. Although all students were expected to seek or verify information during the discussion, not all recited or read aloud.

Seatwork emphasized silent reading, with 20 minutes a day set aside solely for that purpose. Since students had only one activity sheet for the entire week, some informal research, and note taking on stories, they had plenty of time to read. The three lower groups

were assigned 26, 30, and 36 pages respectively in their tradebooks; the two higher had 32 and 49 pages. Many students who had finished their assignments early read recreational materials. Time was also spent working on writing and research assignments given during another period of the day. Library research was informal, that is students went there to seek various kinds of information related to their reading and reported back on it, but no written papers were assigned.

It should be re-emphasized that the TT gave instruction in writing and speaking separate from reading in time periods that were not observed. Although assignments in these areas were worked on during reading time, the teacher provided separate time for the bulk of such work to be done.

In the TC there were three other parts to the reading period. One I will call "general activity time" for lack of a better term; the second, large group instruction; and the third, individual book conferences. The first occurred daily for 15 minutes at the start of the reading period. During that time students moved around the room to work on any of several bulletin board quizzes on science, language arts, current events, etc. which were changed weekly. Questions could be answered by reading newspapers, magazines or classroom reference sources. These quizzes were part of the regular reading program, intended to complement the reading of fiction. While students were thus engaged, the teacher made contact with several individuals who needed help. She went over problems on written work that had been handed in or checked their progress on work currently assigned in conferences of from one to five minutes. In other words, general activity time was also time for monitoring and remediation.

Large group instruction took place three times during the days observed. The TT used short time periods as necessary to introduce such things as how to use an almanac or to go over common problems in completed written work.

During the reading sessions only five individual book conferences were held, but the teacher indicated that she was having them at spare moments throughout the school day, averaging ten per week. Each child is expected to discuss at least twelve recreational books per school year at such conferences.

Teacher Time Distribution

Much of the information about the ways that both teachers used their reading time has already been implied through the description of activities, but it seems worthwhile to focus on time alone, as distributed among types of teaching activities, in order to see a clearer picture of the emphases in each program. Fortunately, on the day they were observed both teachers held a reading session of approximately 80 minutes, so there is a common base for comparing minutes. Nevertheless, minutes will also be expressed as percentages to suggest relationships of emphasis.

Breakdown of Teacher Time
One 80 Minute Reading Session

	BT		TT	
	Min.	%	Min.	%
Directions	4	5	7	9
Discussion	20	25	18	23
Monitoring and Remediation (1 to 1)	2	3	19	23
Preparation	0	0	1	1
Instruction	9	11	16	20
Oral reading	1	1	0	0
Silent reading	0	0	18	23
Correction of exercises	11	14	0	0
Listening	24	30	0	0
Paperwork	0	0	0	0
	71*		79*	

Some of the items in the breakdown need explanation and qualification. Discussion, for example, was not only discussion, but included some group directions, monitoring, instruction, and remediation that were impossible to separate from discussion. Monitoring and remediation, on the other hand, refer only to work done with individual children. The time

*Some time lost in movement from one activity to another.

devoted to preparing students to read in both classes was quite small. It is possible that some preparation was included in discussion time for both. Instruction time for the TT includes the guidance of two oral activities during reading groups, so she actually was not instructing the full time; however, the percentage was typical of the other days I was present in the classroom. In her own silent reading time the TT skimmed over the sections of tradebooks to be discussed that day and her notes. Her purpose was to demonstrate to students that adults read silently on a regular basis, too. The BT did not use class time for lesson preparation. Her correction time took place during group work and included some instruction. Her listening time was when students were reading aloud; it represents listening alone.

One feature of teacher time use that is not revealed by the chart data is pace of instruction. The BT on all days observed appeared to be racing against the clock, squeezing something into every last second of her two hour language arts block; while the TT proceeded at a far more relaxed pace. Rigid class scheduling no doubt accounts for part of the pressure the BT appeared to feel, but the large number of objectives to be taught and exercises to be checked in Macmillan R certainly added to it.

Student Time Distribution

The ways in which students spent their reading period time gives another perspective on both reading programs. Not only does it underscore certain emphases that become apparent in the accounts of class activities and teacher time distribution, but it suggests how each program influences what students do while not under direct supervision of the teacher. For this reason the category of "wasted time" was also included.

The following tables express the work patterns of three students from each classroom on a particular day in minutes and percentages. The teachers were asked to select students for me to follow who were low, middle, and high readers but also steady workers. On the mornings I followed these students there were approximately 85 minutes in each reading session; the slight discrepancies in total times for students represent the difficulties in deciding exactly when one activity ends and another begins--especially wasting time.

Student Time Distribution
One 85 Minute Reading Session

	Basal Classroom			Tradebook Classroom		
	L	M	H	L	M	H*
receiving directions and explanations	2	2	2	8	8	8
reading group	29	27	14	-	-	9
silent reading	-	15	-	14	17	23
workbooks/worksheets	53	39	41	13	-	9
research	-	-	27	12	17	34
writing/composition	-	-	-	25	42	-
wasting time	2	3	3	13	1	1
Totals	86	86	87	85	85	84

Percentages of Total Time

	L	M	H	L	M	H*
receiving directions and explanations	2	2	2	9	9	9
reading group	34	32	16	-	-	11
silent reading	-	18	-	16	20	27
workbooks/worksheets	62	46	48	15	-	11
research	-	-	32	14	20	40
writing/composition	-	-	-	29	49	-
wasting time	2	4	4	15	1	1

*Low, middle and high reading students in each classroom

As before, some explanation and comment are needed. The time for reading groups was lumped rather than broken down because of the difficulty of recording and representing the rapid shifts and the short durations of behaviors. Students might skim for a few second, listen for a few more, answer a question, etc., etc. The one activity that was sustained - oral reading in the BC - consumed about two minutes of each student's time. Furthermore, the previous discussions of activities and teacher time also serve as a fairly accurate picture of how students in both classrooms spent group time also, since they had no choice but to participate in the teacher's activities for the full time allotted. Three reading groups met in the TC that day, but only one of the students being followed was a member of such a group so no group time is recorded for the others. It is typical for lower reading groups to meet three times a week and higher groups to meet twice in this classroom.

With silent reading in the TC, it should be noted that the usual 20 minutes of required silent reading was shortened by three minutes the morning observed because of a long explanation given by the teacher just preceding it. One of the three students shortened her time further by devoting part of it to answering questions on her activity sheet, a not unusual practice for students in this classroom when they come across answers while reading and want to get them down right away.

Regarding research, only one group in the BC had a library research assignment going on the day observed, so only one of the students being followed had nay need to work on this type of activity. Typically 3-5 students went to the library for research purposes on any given day.

The research times for the TC actually represent a combination of classroom research to complete quizzes and library research on tradebook-related topics.

The absence of writing observed in the BC on this particular day was not typical; the time spent on writing in the TC on this day was probably longer than on most days, but devoting some time to writing was typical since students were working on a long autobiography project and did short parts of it whenever they could fit it in.

Except for the low reading student in the TC, none of the students observed in either class really wasted time: 1-3 minutes are very small parts of 85 minutes. Although both teachers maintained good discipline in their classrooms, they could not be aware of everything that was going on while they were meeting with reading groups. In the BC this gap in teacher control was compensated for by the many written assignments that had to be done on a daily basis which kept students working steadily; but in the TC, where there were few written assignments and more widely spaced deadlines, students did not have to keep working all the time. Many took short breaks, and one or two irresponsible ones often let things slide in order to socialize.

Although keeping students working steadily is not one of the characteristics of an ideal reading program, it is a significant feature to be considered, not only because of favorable influence on class order, but because it is a widely held assumption that students who work more learn more.

V. Conclusions and Discussion

In evaluating instructional programs seen in action the major difficulty is to separate the teacher from the program. In this case separation is particularly difficult because the tradebook program teacher was also one of its creators and as such no doubt incorporated much of her own personal taste and style into it. A further difficulty in this study is that I am a biased observer and evaluator who came in with a program preference and a vested interest in the outcome. All I can promise the reader is that I am aware of the difficulties and will do my best to be discriminating and fair.

At the beginning of this study the ideal of what a reading program should be was established as our standard for evaluation. In previous sections where programs have been described and analyzed, some measurement against that standard has been implied. In this section we will evaluate each program explicitly for specific characteristics.

At this point, it should be reiterated that the purpose of our dual comparison and measurement processes is not to discredit the basal program, but to show the tradebook program in a realistic context where all programs have flaws. In education, we cannot hope to find panaceas, only to match the strengths of good programs with the needs and characteristics of learners.

Evaluation of Program Characteristics

1. Fullness - Both programs show sufficient fullness to meet this standard, but each has gaps, weaknesses and imbalances.

   Basal Program--The program textbook has variety in types of selection, but tends toward sameness and shallowness in content and style. Missing from the program are full length books, unabridged selections, recreational books and real mass media materials. The textbook readings are predominately non-fiction; there are few classics and

little drama or poetry. Overall quality is fair.

All materials, except reference materials, have been modified for fifth grade level ability, so there is little variation in difficulty. Uniformity of style in the textbook does not demand versatility from the reader.

Tradebook Program--This program offers great variety within types of full-length fiction, reference materials, and mass media, but little or none in other areas. There are few short stories, no plays or essays. Biographies, poetry collections and non-fiction books are under-represented. The range among recreational books chosen by students (and approved by the teacher) appeared to be very wide, including humor, puzzles, and horror as well as more traditional genre.

Materials vary greatly in difficulty. Although the tradebooks in the collection have been classified according to grade level readability, the idiosyncracies of an author's style and vocabulary produce an internal variability that students are expected to cope with. Some mass media and reference materials (e.g., The Bad Speller's Dictionary) have been chosen for their low level of difficulty, but most are adult level materials, unmodified.

Quality among tradebooks varies from fair to excellent, but overall is good. Contemporary literature of depth and style is offered to students even at the lowest reading levels.

2. Purpose - Both programs stress setting purposes for reading and both include approaches geared to purposes. However only the Tradebook Program offers materials aimed at satisfying the inner

human purpose of seeking entertainment, knowledge and imaginative transport in reading.

Basal Program--Materials are weak in style, narrative power and depth of plot and characterization. It does not appear that they could capture the attention of children or hold it very long. In addition, their shallowness makes it difficult for a teacher to set higher level academic purposes for reading, such as interpreting, inferring, and evaluating.

Despite the fact that the Teachers' Guide always sets specific purposes for each selection, the lessons fail to follow up on this point, and the great number of objectives to be covered push purpose to a place of very little prominence where no doubt many teachers believe it can be ignored. Varied approaches to reading are also not emphasized in the lesson plans. The technique of skimming to find information was observed during the classroom sessions.

Tradebook Program--Setting purposes for independent reading is a prominent feature seen in the lesson plans and observed in classroom instruction. Different approaches to reading, such as scanning to find descriptive words and locating specific passages, were observed being practiced in the group setting.

3. Continuity - Continuity is strongly emphasized in the Teachers' Guide, readings, tests and skills component of the Basal Program. In the Tradebook Program continuity in materials and skills is present but loose.

Basal Program--Continuity is one of the strongest features of this program. Teaching objectives are carefully grouped, followed and

annotated throughout to assure introduction, reinforcement, review, assessment and maintenance. Reading selections have been thematically grouped to provide a development of knowledge in particular areas.

Tradebook Program--Continuity in content is not a major thrust of the program, but teachers do encourage students to read recreational books on similar topics or by the same authors as the tradebooks read in the classroom. By attempting to follow children's interests in selecting books, a certain coherence - if not continuity - is maintained. Instructional continuity of a loose sort operates through the grade level labeling of tradebooks and the graduated difficulty of question sheets accompanying them. During classroom observations continuity of progress toward the major program goals of comprehension, appreciation and enthusiasm for reading was observed. Organization of study and research skills in this type of program is difficult, requiring great teacher knowledge and discipline since there is no written guide or set of exercises.

4. Instruction - Both programs provide sufficient instruction aimed at improving reading.

Basal Program--In the Teachers' Guide there was too much instruction, much of it in areas not directly related to reading. In the classroom most instruction was focused on the skills needed to do the assigned written exercises.

Tradebook Program--Instruction in direct reading skills is one of the major reading group activities. Large group instruction tends to focus on writing and study skills, not directly involved in reading.

5. Practice - The Tradebook Program provides a great deal of classroom practice in both guided and independent reading; the Basal Program provides much less.

   Basal Program--Because of the unbalanced lesson structure, little independent reading is demanded compared to the large amount of discussion, oral reading and written work. Seat time is so taken up with written exercises that there is little time for reading recreational or supplementary materials.

   Tradebook Program--The class session format provides at least 20 minutes of independent reading per day and allows time for more. The lesson structure emphasizes independent reading and discussion rather than oral reading or written work.

6. Evaluation - Both programs evaluate student progress and specific weaknesses regularly.

   Basal Program--Regular formal evaluation is done through criterion reference tests.

   Tradebook Program--Evaluation is informally done by teacher through group participation, individual conferences and written assignments. Although evaluation is not systematic or item specific, the teacher appeared to be thorough and perceptive, concerned with progress toward major program goals. There is some question about whether a less experienced teacher could maintain the standard, but structure of program does simplify and aid an informal evaluation process.

7. Remediation - The Basal Program provides no guidance about remediation and its structure mitigates against deviations from lock step progress through the materials. The Tradebook Program provides remediation in small amounts as needed; its structure

encourages it.

Basal Program--Although the testing component does a good job of identifying weaknesses in discrete skills, the Teachers' Guide does not address the problem other than giving extra exercises. The rigid grouping structure and placement procedures make it difficult to move students, adjust pace, or give individual help.

Tradebook Program--Program structure allows for slowing the pace of a group or moving students to other groups. There is daily time for individual and group remedial work.

8. Motivation - The Basal Program provides little stimulation or enticement for further reading; the Tradebook Program focuses on encouraging students to read more.

Basal Program--Neither the materials nor the Teachers' Guide emphasizes the pleasure and usefulness of reading. There is little attempt to guide students toward further exploration of authors' works or types and topics.

Tradebook Program--Both materials and discussions work to persuade students that reading is a worthwhile activity. Small group instruction encourages students to pursue other works by authors read in class and works of the same type or topic.

In summary, it appears that both reading programs are complete and responsible, but that each has its strengths and weaknesses. The Basal Program is strong in continuity and evaluation, providing teachers with a thorough system for teaching and testing and materials of consistent and graduated difficulty. Teachers who are inexperienced, disorganized or anxious can use this program with assurance that all bases are being covered.

The program has weaknesses in variety, purpose and instruction that could be strengthened by adding supplementary materials and modifying the Teachers' Guide. The problem of lack of depth and quality in materials, however, is a more serious one that cannot be remedied without a complete revision of the textbook and the philosophy that guides it.

Also serious is the paucity of reading practice, remediation and motivation. These problems cannot be solved without a complete overhaul of materials, placement procedures, and lesson structure.

The Tradebook Program is strong in the areas of purpose, instruction, practice, remediation and motivation. It's clear that the longer reading assignments, the exclusion of extraneous skill work and the absence of workbooks allow much more time and flexibility for teachers to teach and students to read. Yet, certainly there is a looseness to the structure, expecially apparent in the lack of guidance about continuity and evaluation, that would make it difficult for an inexperienced or disorganized teacher to handle this program.

Also, the program does not have as much variety in readings as one might wish for - although it has depth and quality - but this weakness could be easily remedied by adding more materials.

One issue deliberately not addressed in this study is the value of teaching of discrete skills, which the Tradebook Program does little of and the Basal Program does in abundance. This is a philosophical controversy that we are not prepared to resolve. Authors of the Basal Program along with most reading experts, believe that understanding and practicing discrete skills, such as recognizing the long vowel sound in one syllable words that end in e or putting a set of short paragraphs into the right sequential order, are necessary for development of over-

all excellence in reading. The creators of our tradebook program, backed by a small but persuasive group of experts, believe that such a dissection of language and literature is unnecessary and even detrimental to the reading process. In their teaching they deal with literature, language, and the backgrounds children bring to them as an inseparable whole. Thus, we cannot call their approach to skills a weakness or the more widely accepted approach in the Basal Program a strength. We must withhold judgment on this point until a great deal more research is done.

In the last analysis the attributes that stand out most in the Tradebook Program are the extensive reading practice and the nurturing of the desire to read. Teachers must decide for themselves if these strengths are important enough to recommend the program for their own classrooms.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Robert Karlin, Teaching Elementary Reading, 2nd Ed.: Principles and Strategies (New York: Harcourt Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1975) p. 43

2. Gilbert Schiffman, "Program Administration Within a School System," in John Money, ed., The Disabled Reader (Baltimore:Johns Hopkins Press, 1966) p. 241

3. Wayne Otto and Richard J. Smith, Administering the School Reading Program (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1970) p. 72

4. Richard J. Smith and Thomas C. Barrett, Teaching Reading in the Middle Grades, 2nd Ed. (Reading, Mass.: Addison, Wesley, 1979) p. 10

5. Gertrude Whipple, "What is a Good Reading Program," in Albert J. Harris, ed. Readings on Reading Instruction (New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1964) pp. 17-21

6. Carl B. Smith and Ronald Wardhaugh, Echoes of Time: Moments, Birds and Beasts, Signals; Teachers' Edition (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1980) p. x

7. Ibid., p. xii

8. Ibid., pp. xiii, xvii